



North Dakota

Contact

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Background

In North Dakota, the 5 A Day Program is part of the 5 Plus 5 Program, which promotes healthy nutrition and physical activity. The program began in 4 North Dakota communities in 1998 and has since grown to 19 communities in 2004. It reaches an estimated 475,000 people, or 74% of the state's population. The program is modeled after the Iowa 5 Plus 5 Program.

Program Focus

The 5 Plus 5 Program encourages North Dakota citizens to eat fruits and vegetables 5 times a day and to be physically active for 30 minutes at least 5 days a week. These healthy lifestyle changes can help to reduce a person's risk for the state's three leading causes of death—heart disease, some cancers, and diabetes.¹⁶

Unfortunately, only 21.5% of adults and 17.3% of high school students ate fruits and vegetables 5 or more times a day in 2003.^{2,3} In addition, only 16% of students have access to fruits or vegetables in vending machines outside of school meal programs.¹⁷

A healthy diet also can help people manage their weight. In 2002, 61.6% of North Dakota adults were overweight or obese.² In 2003, 20.3% of high school students were overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.³

Program Components

The 5 A Day Program also is part of the governor's public health initiative, *Healthy North Dakota*. This initiative comprises more than 400 North Dakotans representing about 150 agencies, organizations, and businesses. The 19 committees and focus areas support programs to improve the nutritional intake and weight status of state residents.

Over the years, the 5 Plus 5 Program has been funded from a variety of sources, including the federal PHHS Block Grant and the Maternal and Child Health Services Program of the Health Resources and Services Administration. The latter supports the hiring of local public health nutritionists.

In January 2004, CDC funded the state Cardiovascular Health Program to hire a consultant to coordinate and provide technical assistance to the 5 Plus 5 Program. The Cardiovascular Health Program also contributes money to the 5 Plus 5 communities, since improving dietary and physical activity habits can help to reduce risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

Additional support for 5 A Day and 5 Plus 5 programs comes from the North Dakota State University Extension Service, which helps prepare educational materials, train field personnel, and pilot new ways of delivering 5 A Day messages.

In the future, state officials hope to be able to hire a full-time coordinator who can build relationships with new partners, such as the American Heart Association, the USDA's Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program, participants in the state's new farmers' market initiative, other produce retailers, and farmers.

A full-time coordinator also could help support efforts to enhance school nutrition policies and practices, such as increasing students' access to healthy snack options and improving the quality of fruits and vegetables served in school meals.

Banking on Improved Health

Each Monday morning, Duane fills a basket with fresh fruits and vegetables, juice, milk, and bread at the local grocery store in Williston, North Dakota. After he checks out, Duane goes straight to work at American State Bank. He heads to the employee break room, where he unloads the food into the refrigerator and onto shelves.

A couple of hours later, two tellers stop by and help themselves to a banana and a glass of milk. At lunchtime, other employees supplement their sack lunches with apples and baby carrots. During the afternoon staff meeting, employees grab a snack from a fruit tray to refresh themselves.

Although these activities sound too good to be true, they're not. They are an example of how an employer can create a work site environment that supports healthy living for its workers.

In this case, the managers at American State Bank routinely buy healthy snacks for their employees. Duane, the bank's maintenance man, does the shopping each week as part of his regular duties. Fruit trays are provided at monthly staff meetings, and the bank also subsidizes employees' memberships at local fitness centers.

"The bank has been providing these healthy foods to employees for nearly 10 years," said Vicki, a human resources associate. "Employees appreciate and eat the fruits and vegetables—there are seldom any left by Friday."

During this past winter, the bank also encouraged its workers to participate in a 5 A Day Challenge with employees

from five other local businesses. Local public health nutritionists coordinated the challenge, providing educational sessions and setting up challenge boards in employee break rooms.

Programs such as these aren't new in Williston, which was one of the original four communities to participate in the state's 5 Plus 5 Program. This program encourages people to eat fruits and vegetables 5 times a day and to be physically active for 30 minutes at least 5 days a week.

The challenge boards displayed each team member's progress in eating 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables a day. Overall team scores were tallied on a different board, which was prominently displayed at the local library.

According to participants, the challenge paid off. One bank teller said that afterwards, she began reaching for fruit and vegetable snacks rather than the sugary, high-fat baked goods typically found in employee break rooms.

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In Williston, program coordinators have promoted work site health, partnered with a local farmers' market, and provided lesson plans called *5 Plus 5 for 5th Graders* to area teachers.

Today, 19 North Dakota communities participate in the 5 Plus 5 Program, conducting a wide range of interventions. In state schools, organizers are working to implement fruits-and-vegetables-only snack policies and to promote the program with fun activities such as preparing a giant fruit salad in a wheelbarrow.

To reach the broader community, one project helped residents track their daily steps on a state map, allowing them to take a "virtual" walk around North Dakota. Another project encouraged people to increase their use of the Lewis and Clark Nature Trail near New Town.

Back in Williston, it's Friday, and American State Bank is closing. Employees are heading home, and the chatter and clatter of the break room has quieted. But when Monday morning rolls around, it will bring a renewed opportunity for some Williston residents to lead a healthier life!